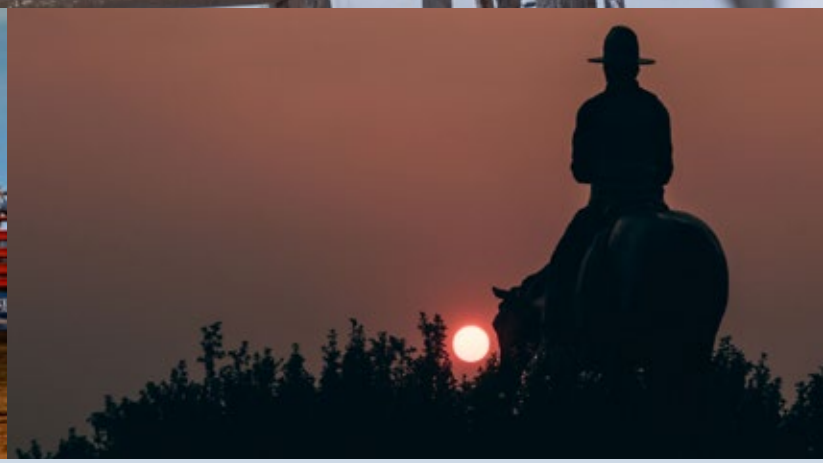






Town of Cochrane

Cochrane Parks, Culture and Active Living Master Plan

Prioritizing Parks, Recreation, Culture and Connectivity

What We Heard Report – Phase 2

October 2025

rcs+

cochrane
HOW THE WEST IS NOW



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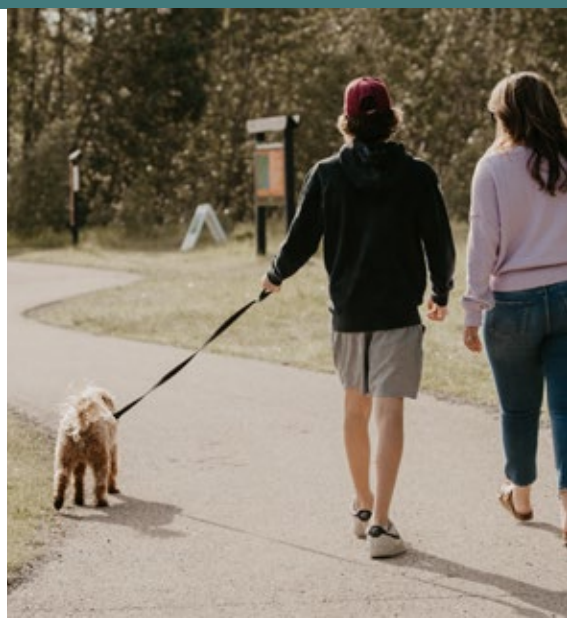
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1 Introduction



As part of developing Cochrane's Parks, Culture and Active Living Master Plan, a three-phase engagement process (shown in the accompanying graphic) is being carried out to better understand local needs, priorities, and levels of agreement with the draft Master Plan. In the fall, Phase 1 gathered residents' insights into their favourite activities, the facilities they use most, and the community values they hold, helping to identify local priorities and interests (as detailed in the Phase 1 "*What We Heard*" report).

Building on this foundation, Phase 2 invited residents to share ideas and feedback to help guide and prioritize Cochrane's parks, recreation, culture, and connectivity planning over the next 10 years.



Phase 1: Preferences, Satisfaction and Values

Phase 2: Priorities

Phase 3: Master Plan Development and Review







2 Engagement Findings

The following document reports on the findings from Phase 2 of engagement. The tactics implemented are presented in the following chart.



Pop-Up Events
~120 participants

Resident Survey
333 participants



Youth Pop-Up Event
30 participants

Group Meetings
84 participants (32 community and recreation, 20 arts and culture)





2.1 Resident Survey

An online survey was conducted through the Town's engagement platform, Let's Talk Cochrane, to gather public input and help guide the prioritization of parks, culture, and recreation opportunities, facilities, and amenities. Respondents were required to sign up to the Towns platform to take the survey. In total 333 responses were gathered. The survey was promoted through various methods including:

- Town Social Media Chanels
- The Town's Website (Cochrane.ca)
- The Towns Engagement Platform (letstalkcochrane.ca)

The findings from the survey are presented below. They follow the order that the questions were posed in the survey. Not all respondents answered each question, the percentages shown represent those who answered the question.

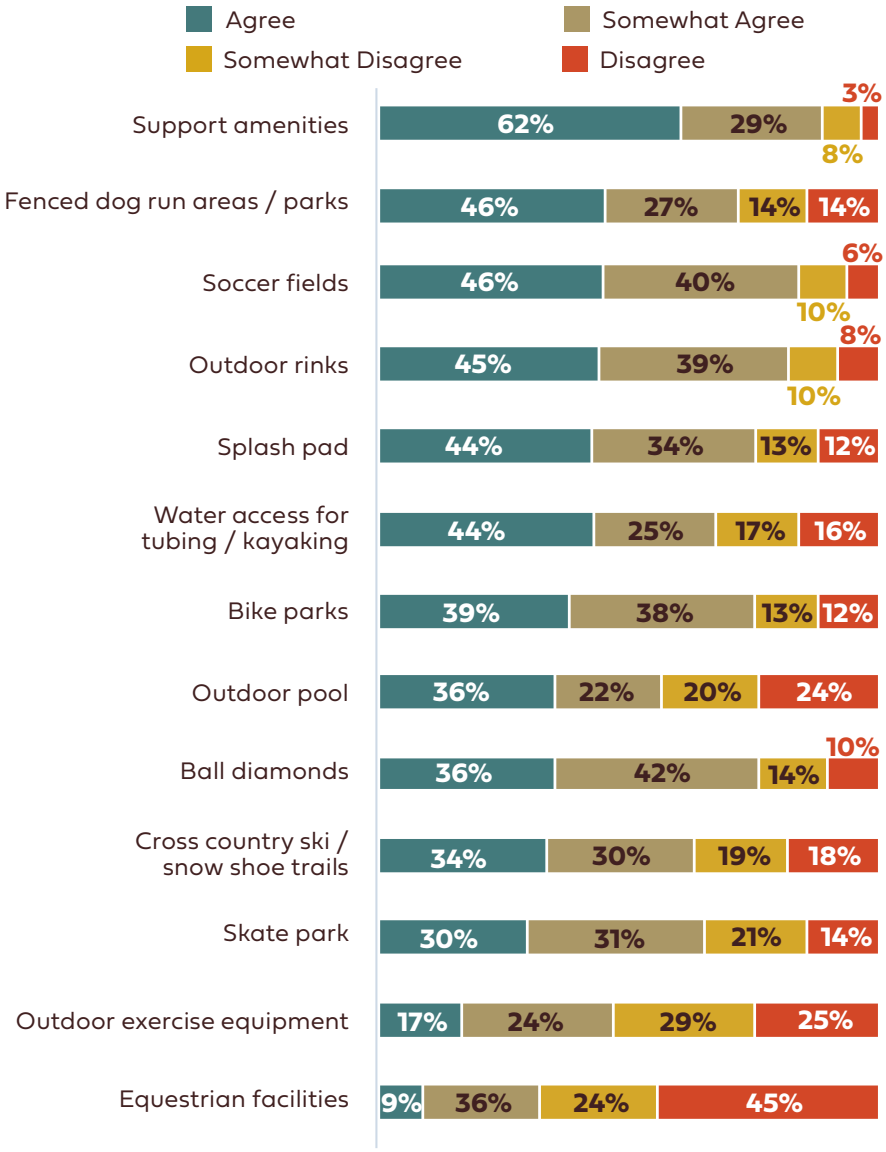




2.1.1 Recreation Priorities

To begin, respondents were asked whether they agreed with the outdoor facilities and amenities identified for investment during phase 1 engagement. Almost all respondents agreed that investment in support amenities like washrooms and seating should be considered (91% agreed or somewhat agreed). Soccer fields, splash pads, and outdoor rinks also saw strong agreement, with 85-86% of respondents in favour.

Level of Agreement for Investment in Outdoor Facilities and Amenities









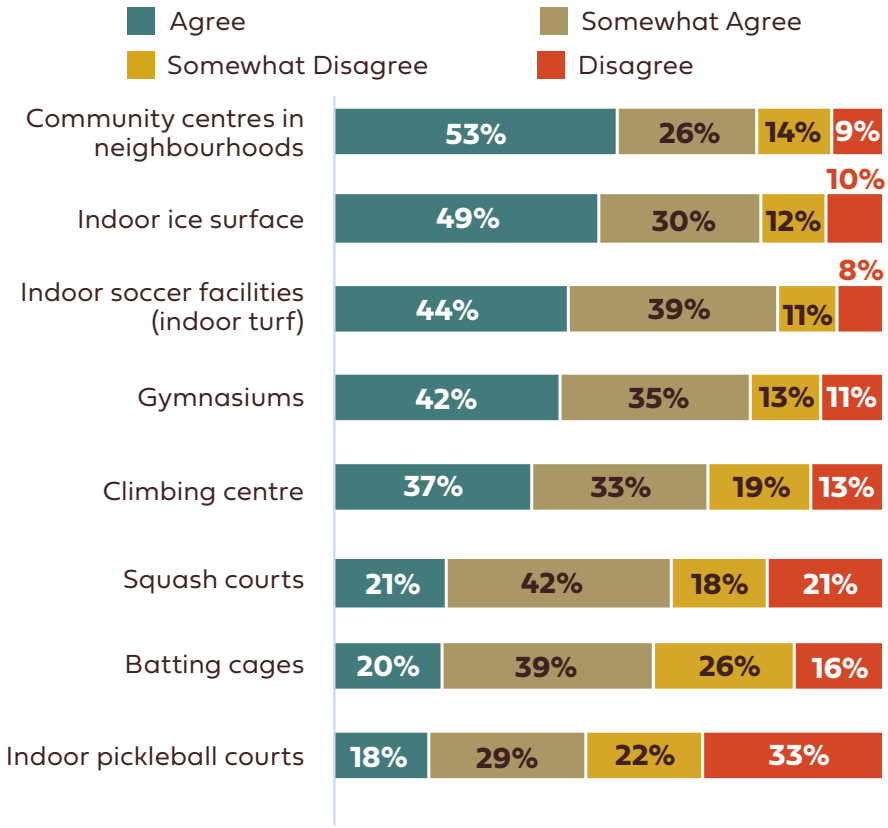


Respondents were able to share additional outdoor facilities and amenities to be considered for investment.

Theme	Number of Comments	Details
Parks & Green Spaces	30	Large parks, picnic areas and more green spaces with shade trees.
Indoor/Outdoor Courts	25	Dome or covered multi-use courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball.
Trails and Connectivity	25	Paved multi-use trails connecting neighborhoods, bike paths, and safer pedestrian routes. Outdoor fitness equipment along the trails and in parks was also mentioned.
Dog Parks and Off-Leash Areas	20	Fully fenced dog parks with shade, water, and separate areas for small and large dogs.
Playgrounds	15	New and improved playgrounds for all ages, including teens and nature-based features.
Sports Fields & Facilities	15	Rugby fields, soccer fields and ball diamonds
Outdoor Water-Related Amenities	12	Splash parks, outdoor pools and river access points.
Event & Gathering Spaces	10	Outdoor amphitheaters, picnic shelters, and event spaces.
Accessibility and Safety	8	Wheelchair accessible parks/playgrounds, pedestrian safety improvements, and stronger by-law enforcement.
Environmental and Natural Preservation	7	Protect natural land, preserve mature trees, and include Indigenous educational elements.

Considering indoor facilities and amenities for investment, respondents agreed (agree and somewhat agree) that the Town should invest in indoor soccer facilities (83%), indoor ice surface (79%) and community centres in neighbourhoods (79%).

Level of Agreement for Investment in Indoor Facilities and Amenities











Respondents were able to share additional indoor facilities and amenities that should be considered for investment (some re-iterated). The responses are presented in the accompanying chart.

Theme	Number of Comments	Details
Ice Facilities	40	Additional ice surfaces.
Court and Multi-Sport Facilities	20	Indoor basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball and volleyball gymnasium spaces.
Aquatic Facilities	15	Indoor swimming pools including therapy pools, lane pools, diving pools, and space for senior exercise programs.
Indoor Turf and Soccer Facilities	15	Turf fields for year-round use, and facilities supporting soccer, rugby, and other field sports.
Children's Play and Youth Spaces	10	Indoor play areas, playgrounds, and safe drop-in spaces for children and teens.
Community and Multi-Use Spaces	10	Multi-purpose community halls, rentable equipment spaces, meeting rooms, and party rooms.

Next, respondents were asked to identify the types of **recreation programs** that should be more available in Cochrane based on age. Refer to the graphs on the following page for additional findings.

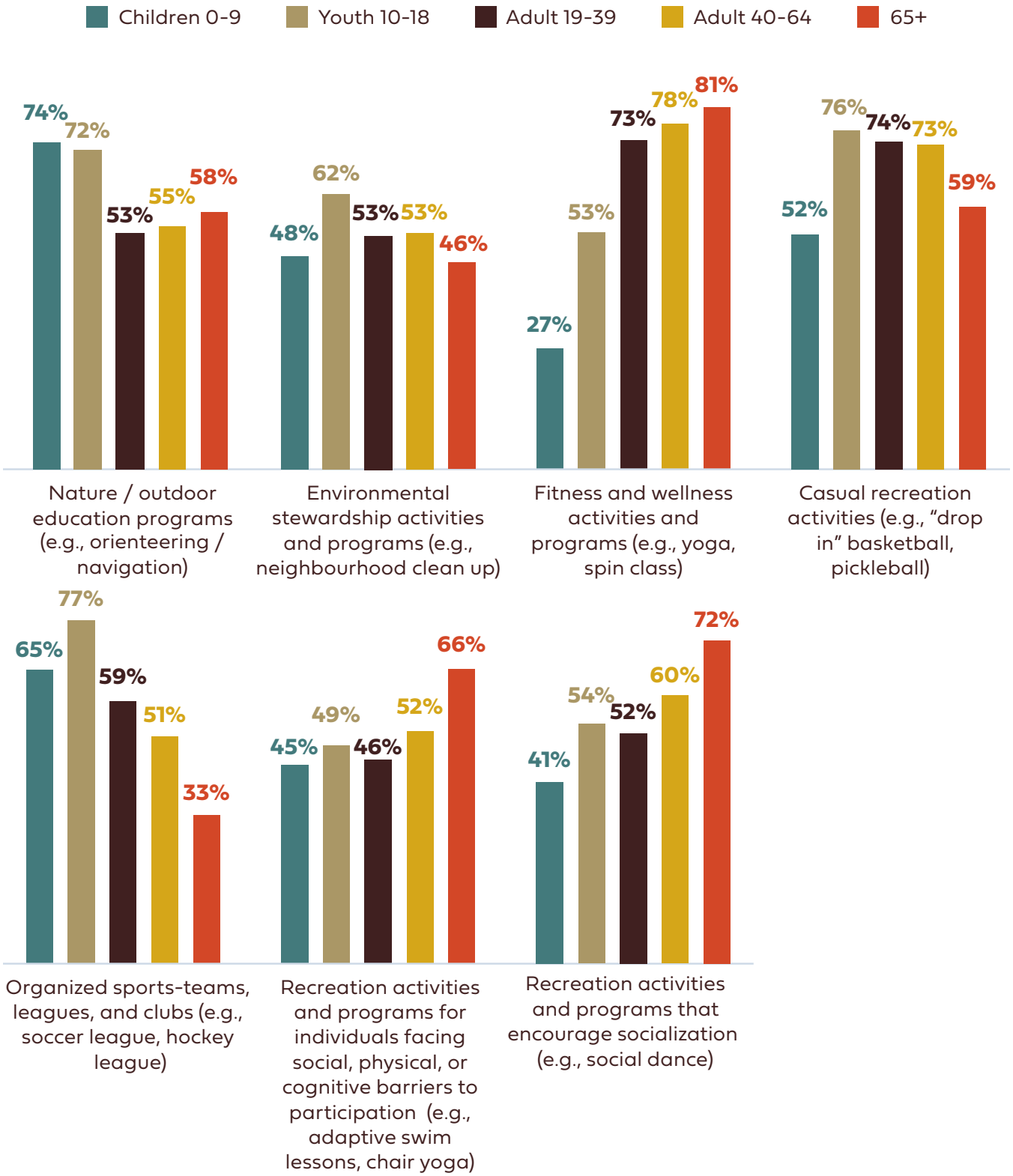
- **For children:** nature and education programming and organized sports emerged as a top priority, with 74% and 65% of respondents highlighting its importance.
- **For youth:** organized sports (77%) and casual recreation programming (76%) emerged as a top priority.
- **For young adults:** causal recreation activities (74%) and fitness and wellness activities and programs (73%) were cited as priority areas.
- **For adults:** fitness and wellness activities (78%) and casual recreation activities (73%) were noted as key program needs.
- **For seniors:** fitness and wellness activities (81%) and recreation activities and programs that encourage socialization (72%) were identified as high priorities.





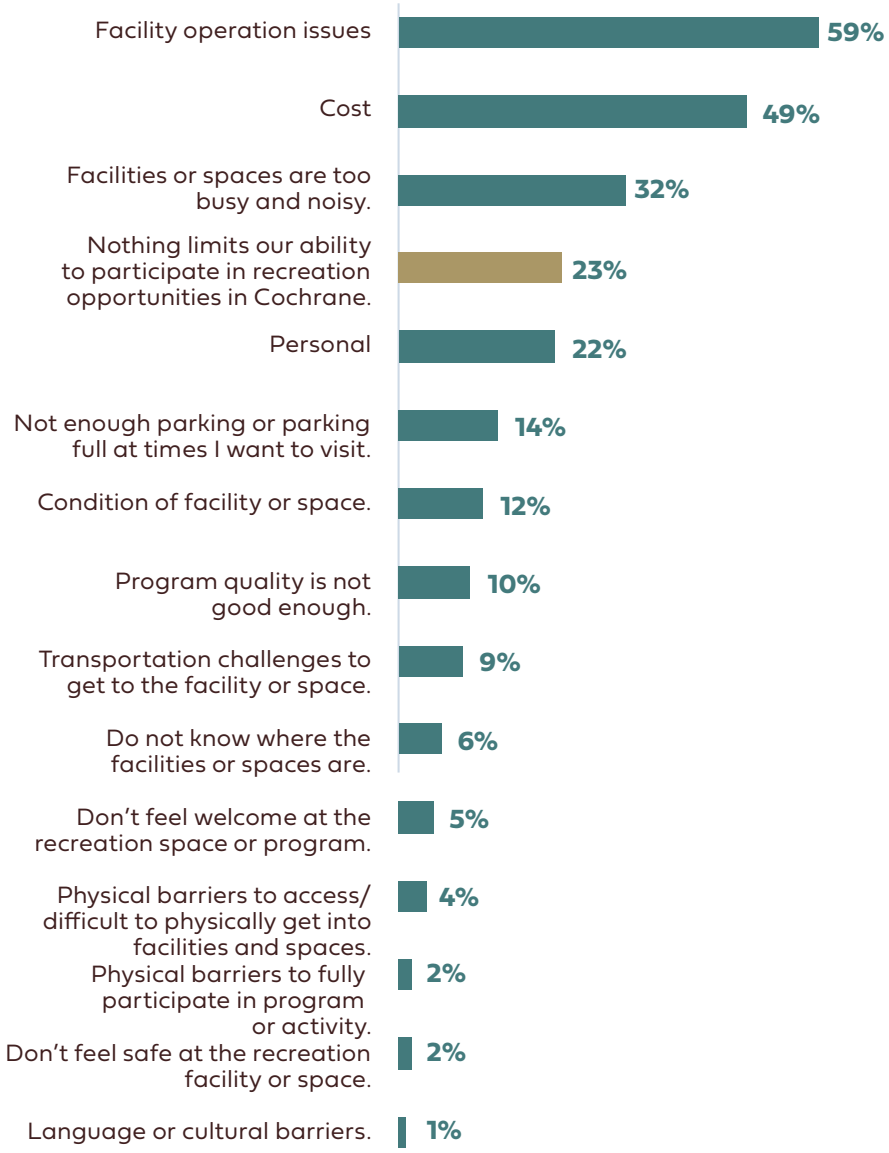


Recreation Programming Need by Age



Respondents were next asked to identify barriers that prevent household members from participating in **recreation opportunities** in the Town. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, the top barriers respondents are facing include: facility operation issues (59%), cost (49%) and the facilities being to busy or noisy (32%). Notably, approximately one-quarter (23%) indicated that nothing limits their ability to participate in recreation opportunities in Cochrane.

Barriers to Participation









Respondents were able to share additional barriers they face when trying to participate in recreation opportunities.

12

Accessibility & Connections (12 comments)

- Limited / unsafe pathway access (Sunset Ridge, Bow River crossing).
- COLT bus route changes affecting access.

8

Indoor Facility Gaps (8 comments)

- Loss of indoor turf / fieldhouse without replacement.
- No track & field facilities in town.

9

Crowding & Scheduling (9 comments)

- Too crowded / not enough space in current facilities.
- Registration fills quickly.

4

Cost & Affordability (4 comments)

- Rising costs risk excluding people.
- Lack of affordable programming from the Town.

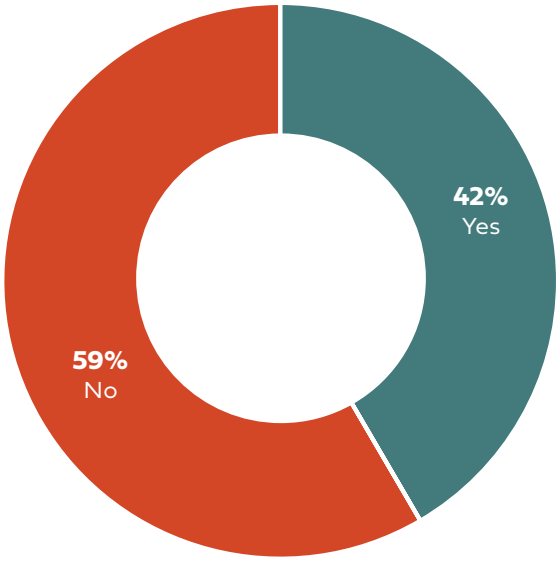
6

Program Availability (6 comments)

- Some programs didn't return post-COVID.
- Overuse by non-Cochrane residents.

Next, over one-third of respondents (42%) indicated that affordability limits their access to recreation opportunities in Cochrane. When asked whether they use programs such as the Cochrane Connect Card (2), Jumpstart (7), KidSport (2), or the Assist Fund (0), most respondents chose not to answer.

Does affordability of recreation facility access or programs prevent you from participating in recreation opportunities in Cochrane?







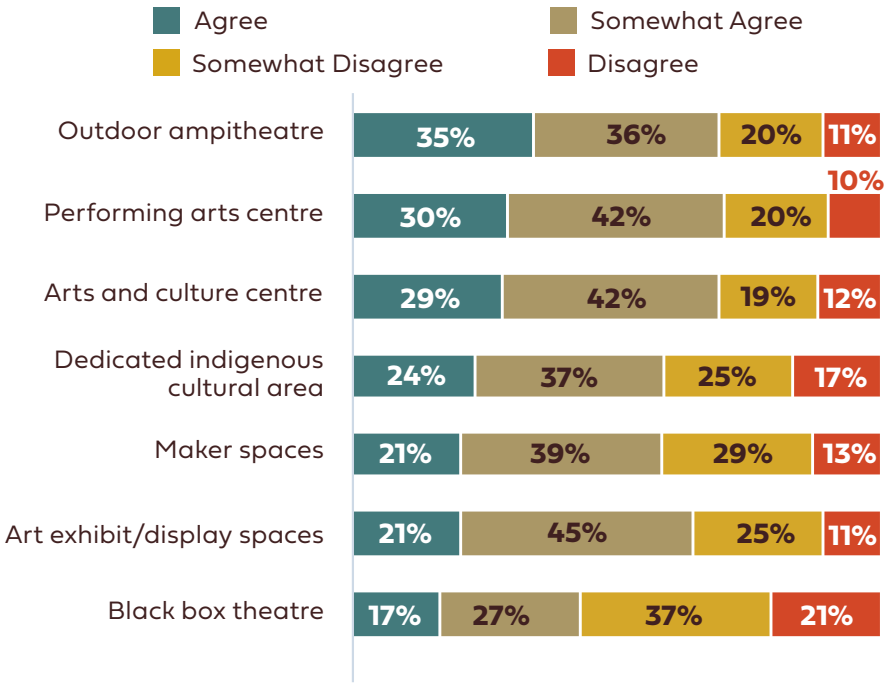




2.1.2 Arts and Culture Priorities

Shifting gears to arts and culture priorities, approximately three-quarters of respondents agree (agree and somewhat agree) that investment for a performing arts centre (72%), outdoor amphitheatre (71%) and arts and culture centre (71%) should be considered.

Level of Agreement for Investment in Arts and Culture Facilities and Amenities



Respondents were able to share additional arts and culture facilities and amenities that should be considered for investment. While some are re-iterated, the findings are presented in the accompanying chart.

Theme	Number of Comments	Details
Performing arts, theatre & indoor cultural spaces	12	Performing arts centre, theatre, dance & studios and multi-use arts facility.
Indigenous history & cultural spaces	10	Dedicated Indigenous cultural centre, interpretive displays, education on local history, shared spaces.
Outdoor performance & art spaces	7	Upgrade outdoor stages, small-covered stages, amphitheatre, outdoor art displays and public art.
Art display	6	Affordable gallery space, rotating exhibits in public buildings, support home art businesses.
Community & social gathering spaces	5	Community centres in neighbourhoods, spaces and multi-use social facilities.
Spaces for markets & festivals	4	Indoor farmers market, festival spaces, live music in parks and neighbourhood festival infrastructure.

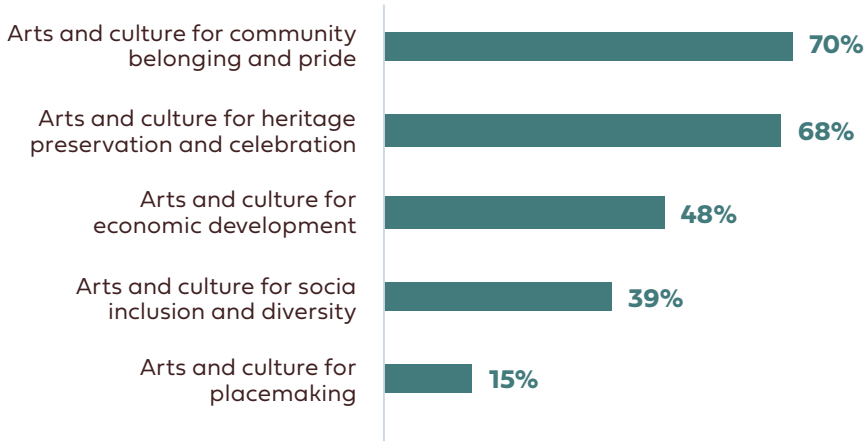






Community arts and culture opportunities offer many benefits. About three-quarters of respondents believe that arts and culture should help foster belonging and pride, as well as preserve and celebrate local heritage.

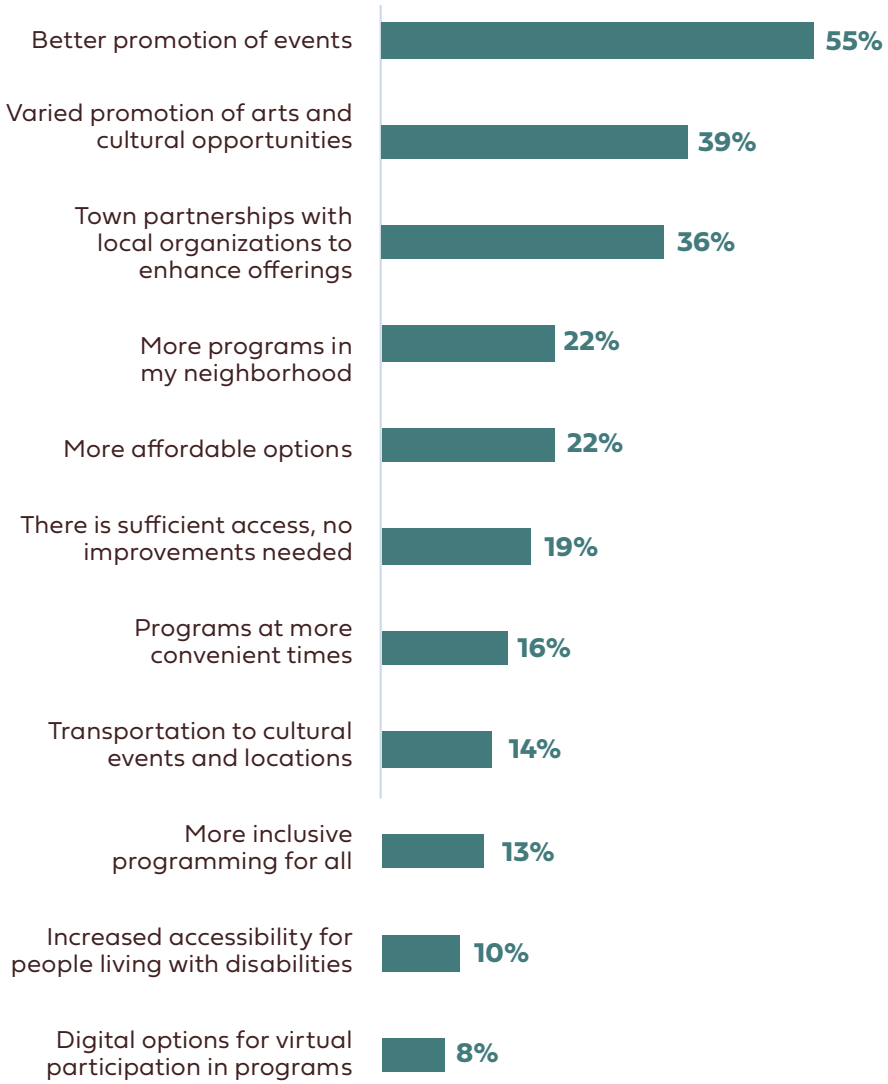
Benefits of Arts and Culture Opportunities





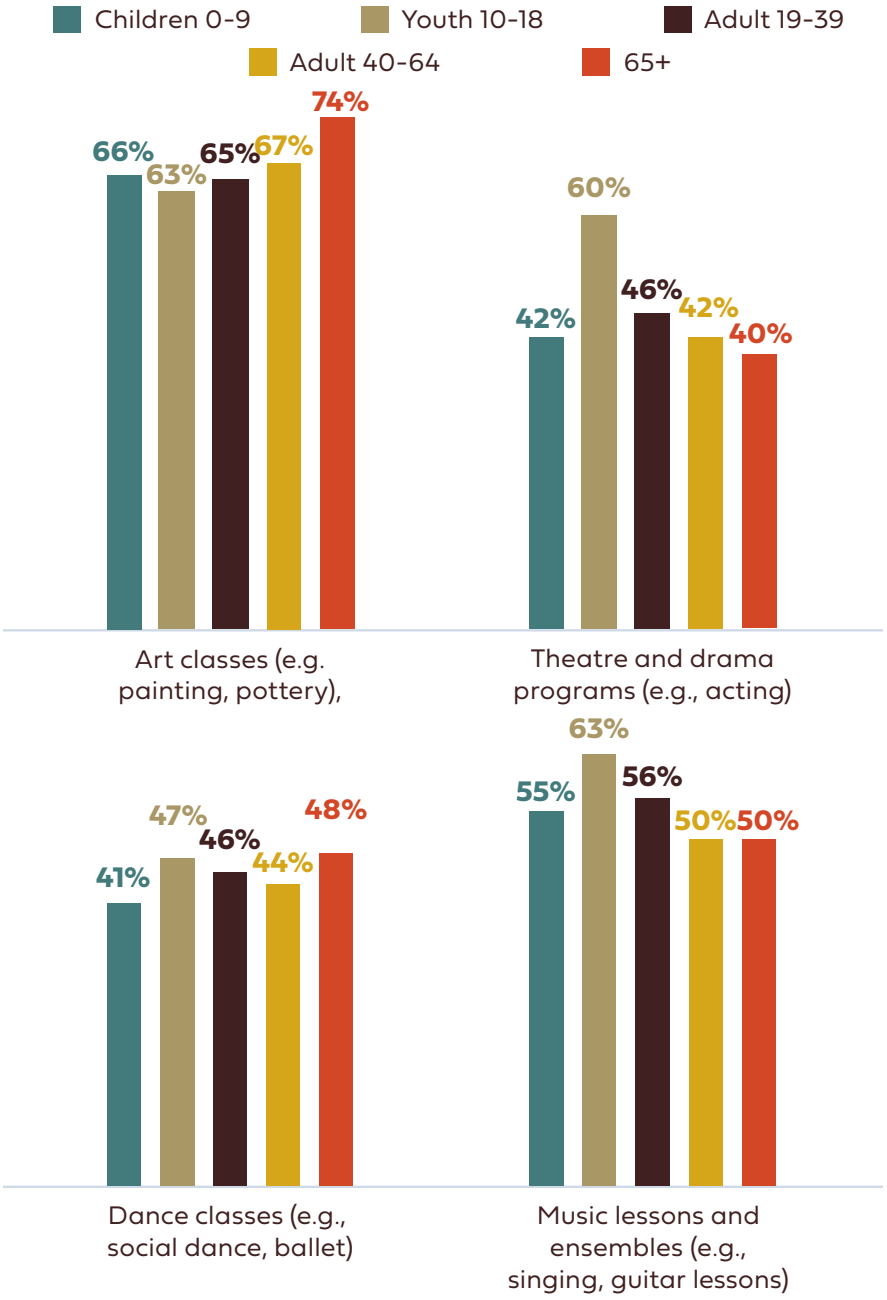
When asked about improving **arts and culture opportunities** in the Town, 55% of respondents indicated a need for better promotion of events. About one-third (39%) identified the importance of using a wider variety of promotion methods, and that the Town should partner with local organizations to enhance offerings (36%).

Improvements to Arts and Culture Opportunities

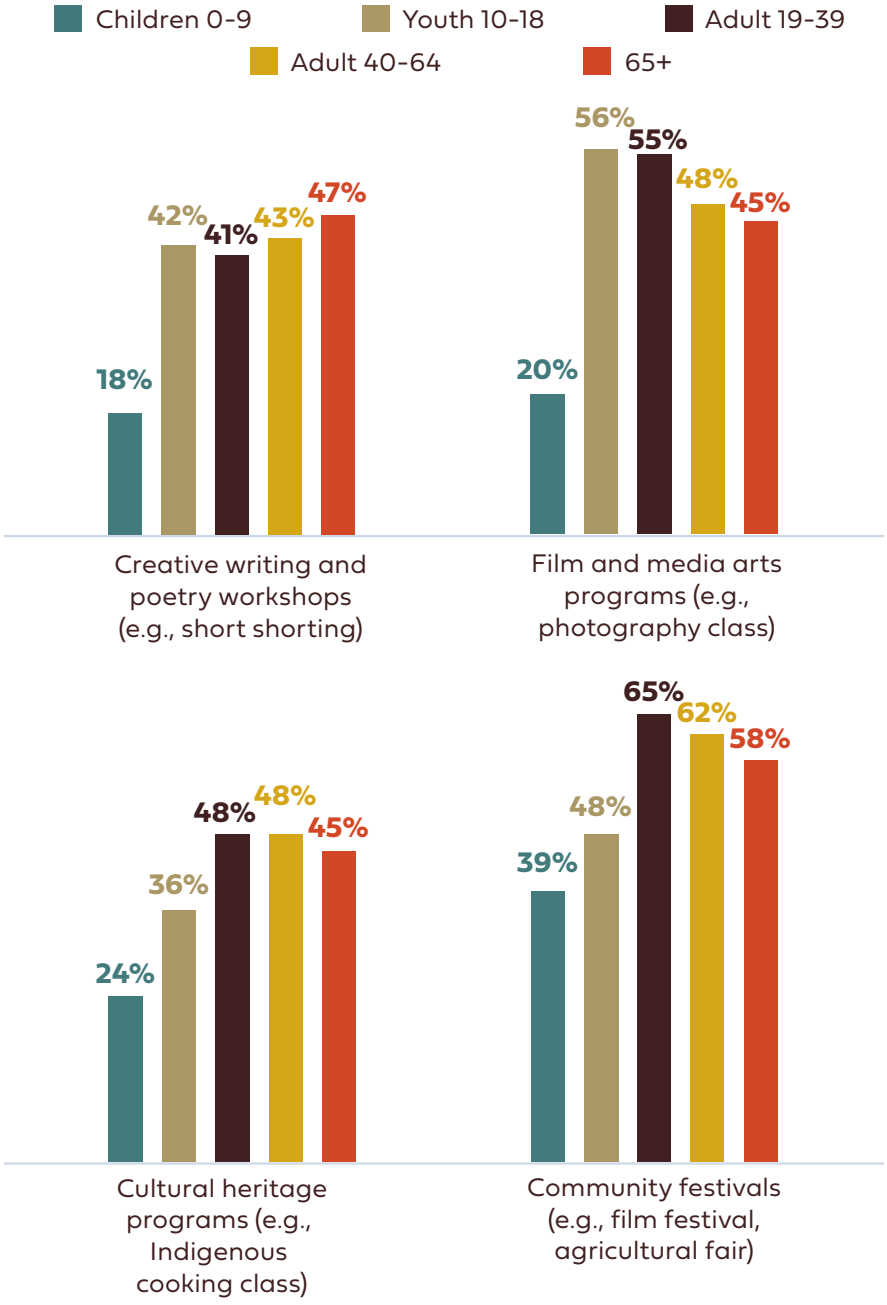


Next, respondents were asked to identify the types of **arts and culture** programs that should be more available in Cochrane based on age. Across age groups, art classes and music lessons emerged as leading priorities: for children, art classes (66%) and music lessons and ensembles (55%) topped the list; for youth, both were identified by 63%. Young adults and adults aged 40–64 prioritized community festivals (65%) and art classes (65%). Among seniors, art classes (74%), programs encouraging socialization (58%), and community festivals were highlighted as key programming priorities. Refer to the graph for additional findings.

Arts and Culture Programming Need by Age



Arts and Culture Programming Need by Age (Continued)



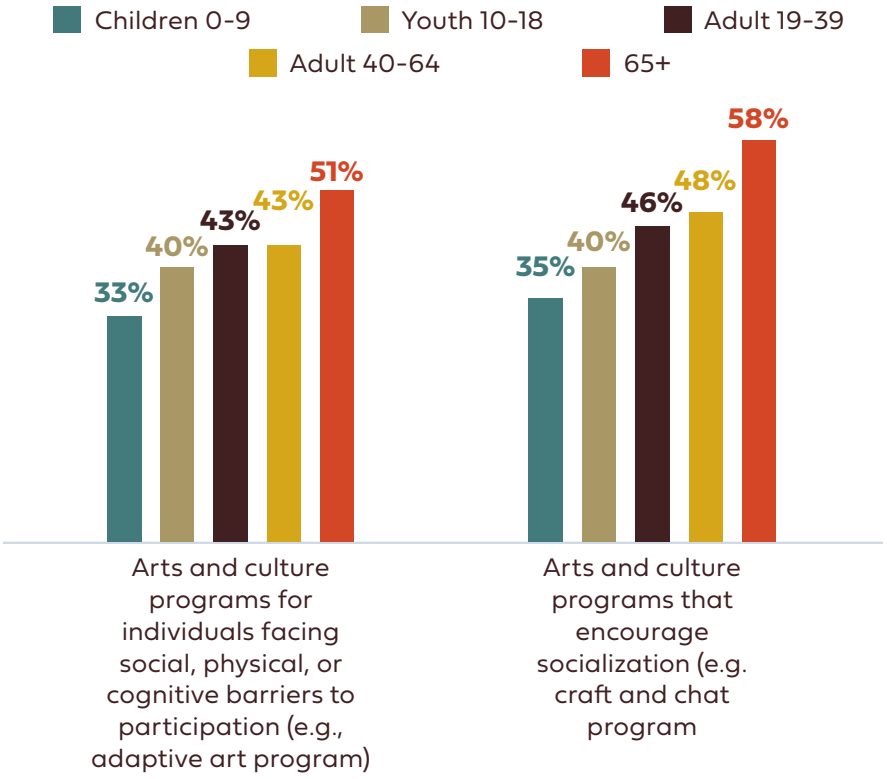








Arts and Culture Programming Need by Age (Continued)

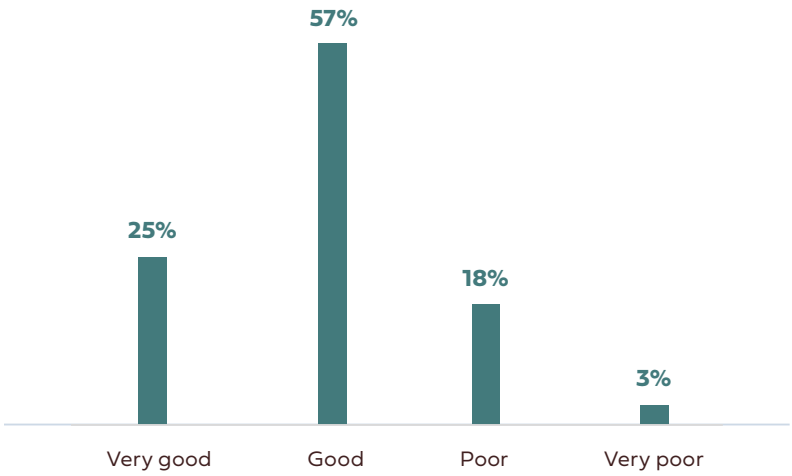


2.1.3 Connectivity Priorities

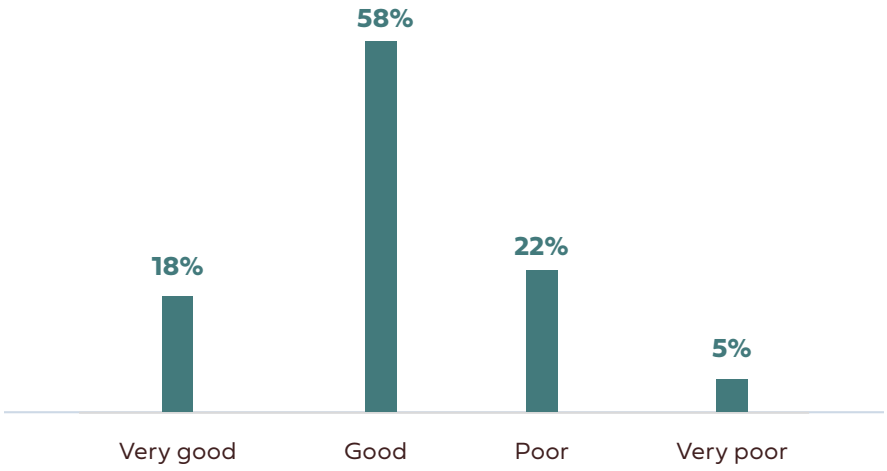
Shifting focus to **pathway** connectivity, respondents were asked to rate the overall connectivity of Cochrane's **pathways**. Almost all (82%) indicated that connectivity in the Town is good or very good.

Similarly, 76% of respondents believe the overall connectivity of Cochrane's **trails** is good or very good.

How would you rate the overall connectivity of **pathways** in Cochrane?



How would you rate the overall connectivity of **trails** in Cochrane?









Respondents were able to explain their answer regarding the connectivity of pathways and trails. The responses are presented in the accompanying chart.

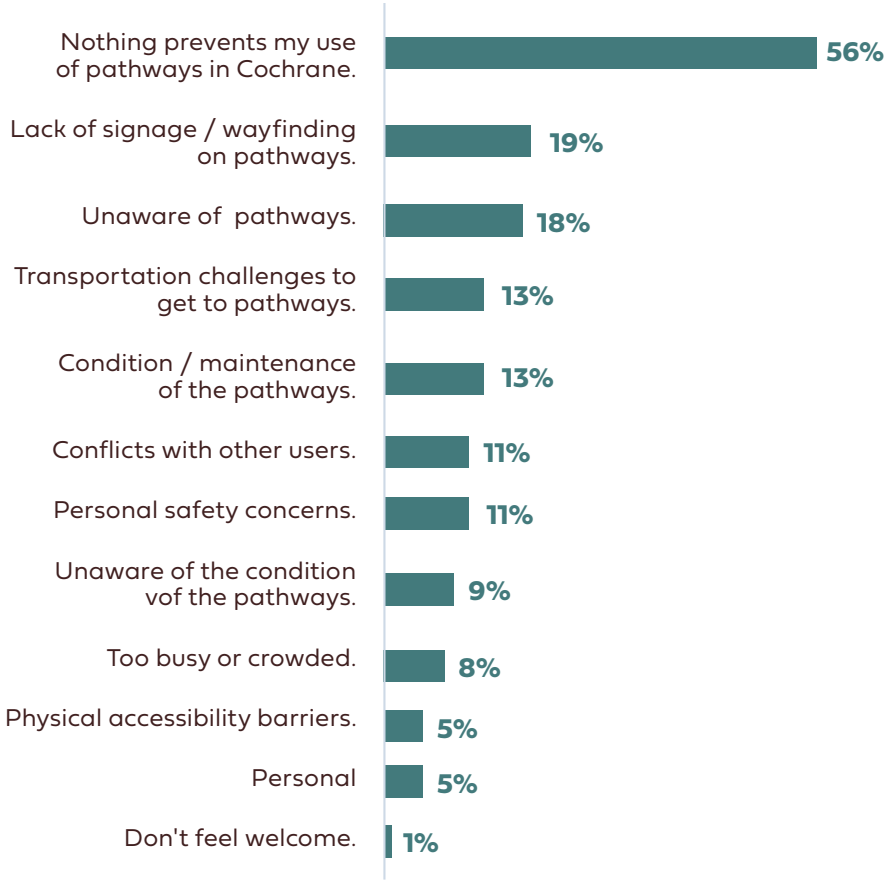
Connectivity of Pathways		
Theme	**Number of Comments**	**Details**
Limited connectivity between neighbourhoods & town core	95	Comments highlight Sunset Ridge, Heritage Hills, Heartland, Fireside, Riversong, Willows and others being disconnected from downtown / bow river / schools / recreation facilities. Barriers include: rail lines, Highway 1A & 22, river, geography (steep hills). Calls for more direct, safe routes linking neighbourhoods to core areas and other communities, especially for kids.
Missing / incomplete pathway links & dead ends	45	Comments about unfinished or "started then stopped" pathways (e.g., behind Sunset pond), paths ending abruptly. Some comments note delays in finishing planned connections (e.g., Sunset Ravine, Big Hill Creek paving). Frustration over slow completion in new developments; respondents indicated that "new areas are left waiting."
Need for safer crossings & separation from traffic	40	Concerns about crossing highways (esp. Hwy 22), busy roads, waiting for trains, narrow bridges (esp. Hwy 22 bridge over Bow River), lack of bike lanes, and missing crosswalks. Suggestions for pedestrian / bike overpasses or underpasses, dedicated bike lanes, and separated multi-use pathways for walkers vs. cyclists.
Pathways seen as excellent overall & well maintained	40	Many praise Cochrane's pathway system: "amazing," "excellent," "well maintained," "easy to get around." Respondents indicated that they cycle or walk almost everywhere; noted year-round maintenance and natural beauty.
Connectivity within neighbourhoods generally good	25	Respondents appreciate local pathway networks inside their own communities (e.g., Riviera, Riversong, West Valley, Glenbow, Riviera, West Terrace). Many praised paved paths, tree-lined routes, winter maintenance, and recent upgrades (e.g., Glenbow pathway, Ranchehouse river connection).
Multi-use pathway conflicts & safety concerns	25	Frustrations about e-bikes, scooters, and speeding cyclists on pathways shared with seniors, kids, walkers, and dog owners. Concerns over off-leash dogs on main connector pathways. Suggestions for dedicated bike-only or pedestrian-only paths, better etiquette education, and safety campaigns.
Pathways into natural spaces & trail extensions	20	Desire to keep pathways connected to green spaces, forests, the Bow River, and trails beyond town (e.g., Glenbow Ranch, Big Hill Springs, Canmore).
Need for better signage, maps & wayfinding	15	Requests for clear signage on routes, distances, difficulty, and connections. Especially helpful for first-time users, youth, seniors, or visitors wanting to know how to get from neighborhood to specific destinations (stores, rec centre, downtown).
Accessibility & inclusivity for mobility-challenged users	15	Praise for paved paths accessible to wheelchairs, strollers, seniors; concern about icy areas, construction disruptions, steep grades, narrow sidewalks, and pathways ending in curbs or grass.

Connectivity of Trails		
Theme	**Number of Comments**	**Details**
Trail Connectivity & Access	90	Comments suggest that the trails are fragmented and often end abruptly. There are gaps across Hwy 22 & 1A, river, train tracks; especially poor links from Sunset, Heritage Hills, Fireside, Heartland; desire for overpasses, underpasses, and regional connections to Glenbow Ranch & Big Hill Springs.
Preference for Natural / Unpaved Trails	40	Preference for dirt or natural trails instead of paved pathways; paved paths seen as less natural, more slippery in winter, and encourage speeding bikes.
Multi-use vs Single-use & Safety Concerns	30	Support for multi-use trails (bike, walk, run) but also concerns about conflict with dogs, seniors and kids; calls for dedicated bike trails, better signage and leash law enforcement.
Environmental Protection & Overdevelopment	25	Concern about trails in environmentally sensitive areas and loss of natural space; calls to manage access, protect natural features, stop over-paving, and preserve green space.
Urban vs Outlying Areas & Desire for More	25	Trail system stronger in central areas; lacks in newer neighbourhoods and outskirts; desire for longer trails, varying difficulty, and trails farther from homes and construction.
Economic & Tourism Opportunity	10	View that adding more trails, especially mountain biking, could boost tourism, local business, and support active lifestyles.



Respondents were asked to identify barriers to accessing **pathways** in the Town. About one-quarter identified a lack of signage and wayfinding (19%) and being unaware of existing pathways as barriers. Notably, over half (56%) indicated that nothing prevents them from using the pathways in the Town.

Barriers to accessing **pathways**

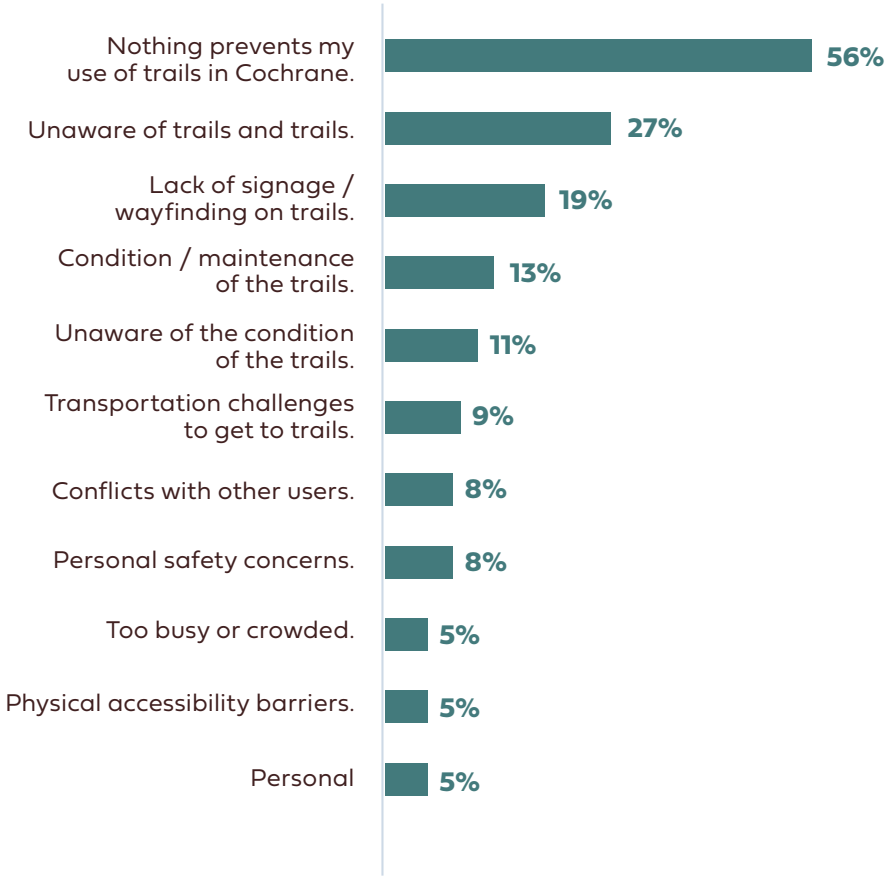


Respondents raised safety concerns about off-leash dogs on **pathways** and poor bylaw enforcement, with calls for stricter leash laws, clearer signage, and better monitoring. Others noted poor connectivity between neighbourhoods and to downtown, and urged improvements like dedicated bike and pedestrian paths, safe crossings over Highway 22 and the railway, and expanded access from all communities. Additional barriers included icy winter conditions, steep or poorly designed pathways, inadequate drainage, lack of public washrooms and lighting, and conflicts between pedestrians and speeding cyclists.

When asked about barriers to accessing **trails** in the Town, about one-quarter (27%) indicated they are unaware of existing trails. Smaller proportions (19%) identified a lack of signage as a barrier. Notably, around half (51%) reported that nothing prevents them from using the trails in Cochrane.

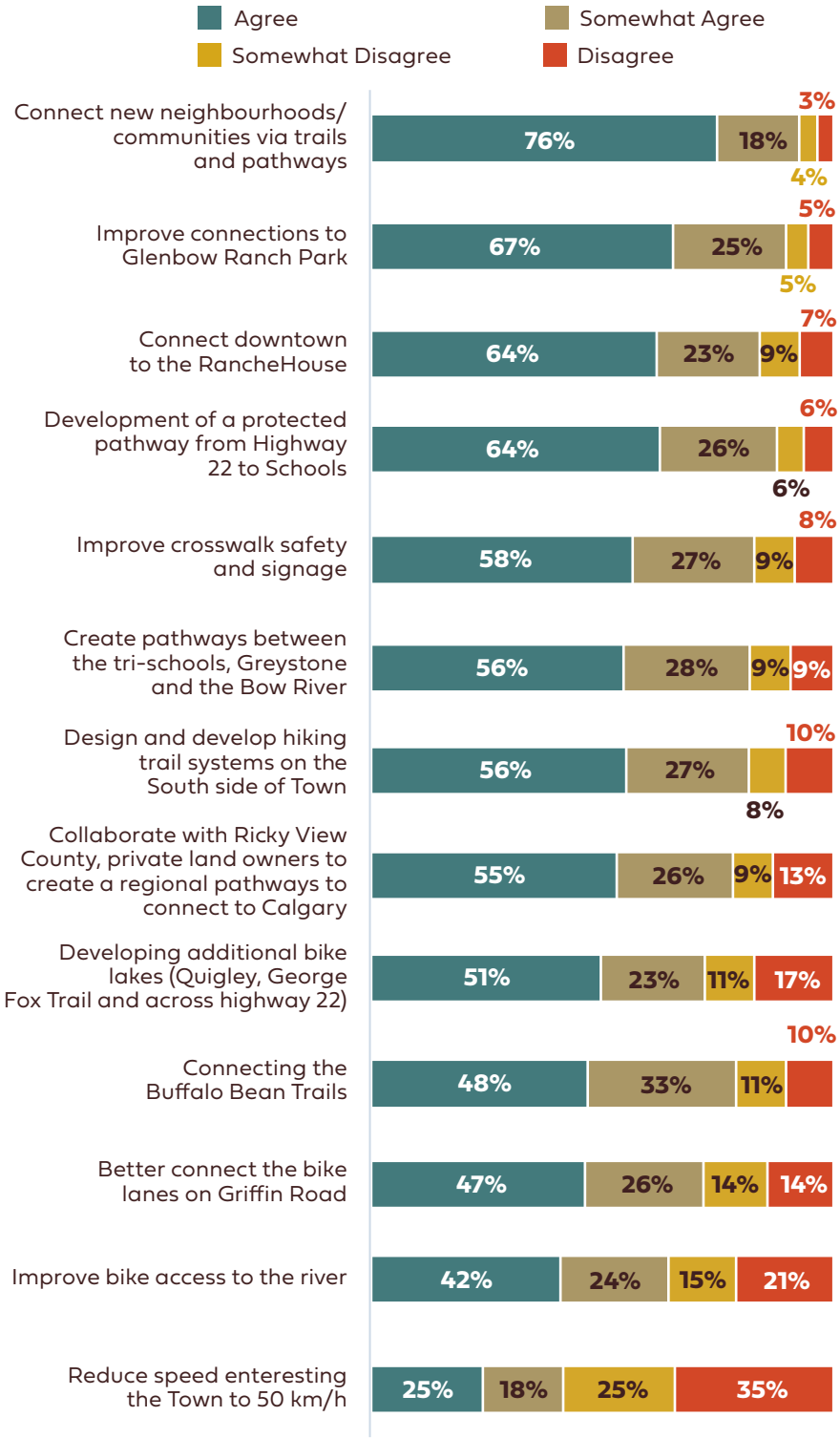
Respondents re-iterated concerns about off-leash dogs on **trails**, noting a lack of enforcement and resulting safety issues. Respondents highlighted that some trails are too steep or unsafe during wet or icy conditions. There is a perceived shortage of natural trails and shaded areas, with limited connectivity between neighborhoods and downtown, especially in areas like Fireside and Heritage Hill. Respondents also re-iterated inadequate washroom facilities, poor lighting in parking areas, and unclear signage about trail access and designation. There were also some calls for better promotion of trails in the Town.

Barriers to accessing **trails**



Trail and pathway **connectivity options** were explored in Phase 1 of engagement. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each option. The top three priorities identified were: connecting new neighbourhoods and communities via trails and pathways (94%), improving connections to Glenbow Ranch Park (92%), and developing a protected pathway from Highway 22 to local schools (90%).

Level of Agreement for Investment in Connectivity Opportunities



Respondents were able to share additional connectivity opportunities (many re-iterated). The responses are presented in the accompanying chart.

Theme	Number of Comments	Details
Community Connections	28	Connect all neighbourhoods (Sunset, Heritage Hills, Fireside, Heartland, South Bow, etc.) with paved pathways linking downtown, rec centre, schools, parks, and complete loop trails to Ghost Lake and Glenbow Ranch.
Safe Crossings & Traffic	18	Build safer crossings over Hwy 22 and 1A (e.g., pedestrian bridges, underpasses); improve train track crossings at Glenbow/ Quigley and Buffalo Bean access; add separated bike/pedestrian paths.
Access & Convenience	14	Provide trail access directly from neighbourhoods without needing to drive; add shaded, natural trails and green spaces; share clear maps/apps; reduce construction impacts on trail access.
Infrastructure & Design	12	Improve curb ramps and accessible connections; add switchbacks on steep paths; include bike lanes, parking, and clearer signage; design multi-use pathways for all users.
Regional & Long-Distance Trails	9	Connect to Calgary via the Trans Canada Trail; expand links to Glenbow Ranch and the Great Canadian Trail; collaborate with Rocky View County on regional networks.
User Safety & Conflicts	9	Manage conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and off-leash dogs; enforce bike speed limits and add education on multi-use trail etiquette.



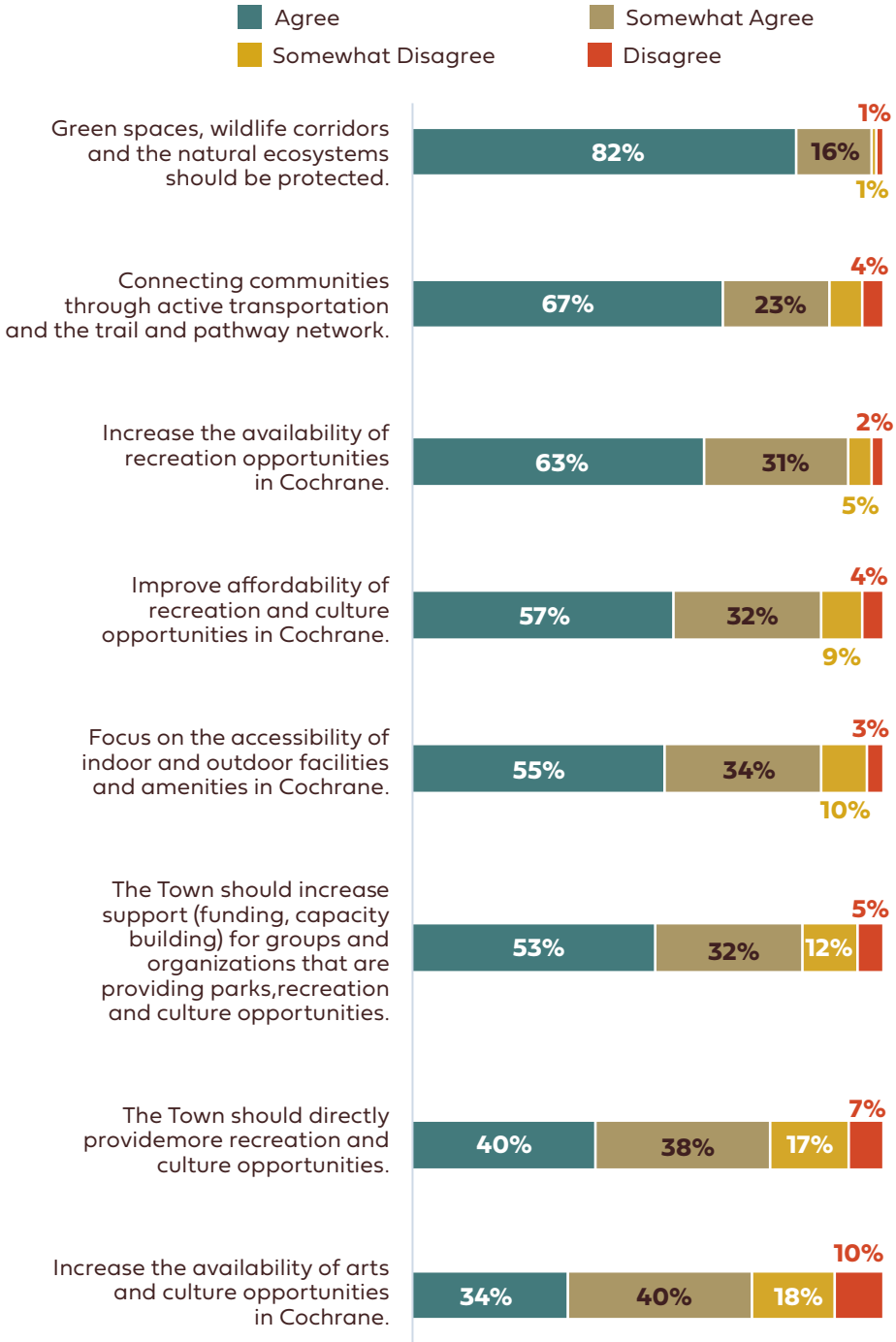




2.1.4 Future Priorities and Goal

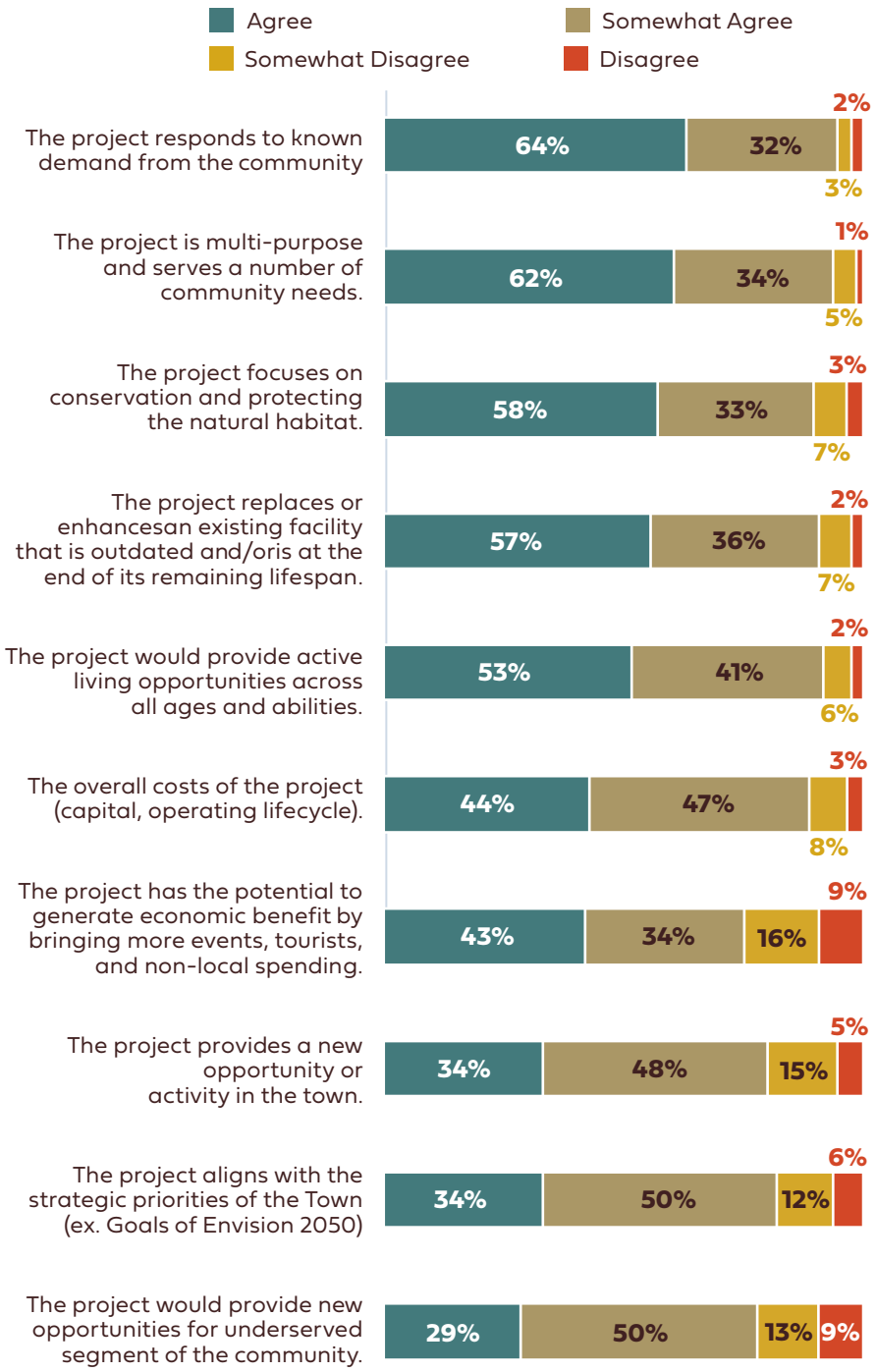
Additional ideas for investment were raised in Phase 1 of engagement. Respondents agreed (agree and somewhat agree) that the top priorities should be protecting green spaces, wildlife corridors, and natural ecosystems (98%), as well as increasing the availability of recreation opportunities in Cochrane (94%).

Level of Agreement for Investment



When considering public investment in parks, culture and recreation amenities and facilities, resources are limited, making it necessary to set clear priorities. Respondents were presented with a list of factors the Town could use to guide these decisions and asked to rate their importance. The top factors identified were ensuring that projects respond to known community demand (96%) and that projects are multi-purpose and serve multiple communities (96%).

Prioritization Criteria



Lastly, respondents were asked to rank a series of Master Plan goals in order of importance. As shown in the accompanying graphic, the most important goals identified were promoting physical activity and healthy living, along with ensuring the sustainable management of facilities and spaces.



Respondents were asked to share additional goals that the Masterplan should achieve. The goals are presented in the accompanying chart.

Master Plan Goal	# of Comments
Improve Connectivity and Wayfinding (trail networks, signage, digital tools)	25
Protect Natural and Environmental Areas (wetlands, wildlife corridors, limit development)	22
Expand and Improve Recreation Facilities (playgrounds, ice rinks, turf fields, etc.)	20
Enhance Safety and Accessibility (safe school routes, crossings, accessibility)	18
Strengthen Enforcement and Management of Public Spaces (dog issues, misuse, signage, fines)	15
Ensure Sustainable Growth and Infrastructure Planning (developer accountability, growth alignment)	14
Enhance Amenities and Maintenance (washrooms, seating, upkeep)	12
Promote Community Engagement and Cultural Opportunities (arts, events, inclusion)	8











Lastly, respondents were able to share any final thoughts they had (some re-iterated) regarding the Parks, Culture and Active Living Master Plan. The responses are synthesized and presenting according to themes.

Theme	Number of Comments	Details
Recreation Facilities Expansion & Quality	45	Build new rinks, fields, indoor turf, courts, and cultural spaces; add neighbourhood-level parks and amenities; modernize aging facilities.
Pathways & Active Transportation Connectivity	30	Expand and connect paved, inclusive pathways linking neighbourhoods, schools, downtown, and regional trails; improve safety at crossings; plan proactively.
Environmental Protection & Green Space Preservation	20	Protect wetlands, forests, and wildlife corridors; prevent development in sensitive areas; add trees and native vegetation; reinforce climate resilience.
Community & Youth Engagement	18	Increase local programs, festivals, and cultural events; create spaces and activities for kids and youth; ensure balanced offerings for all ages.
Safety & Accessibility Improvements	18	Address aggressive dogs and speeding bikes; add public toilets, seating, shelters, and better lighting; design all facilities for accessibility.
Enforcement & Bylaws for Public Spaces	15	Stronger dog bylaw enforcement; clear signage on where dogs aren't allowed; ban dogs on school grounds; clarify permitted uses in ER areas.
Planning & Leadership for Long-Term Vision	12	Town-led planning with a clear vision; require developers to fund community infrastructure; align recreation and culture with health and quality of life goals.

2.2 Youth Engagement

An open house / pop-up event was held at the Cochrane Library on Teen Takeover Night on May 2nd. Youth were presented with the opportunity to tell the project team what they would do if they were mayor for a day. The responses are presented below:

Pedestrian & Traffic Safety

- Suggestions to install a crosswalk at CLC, youth emphasized feeling unsafe trying to cross the road after during and after school.
- Call for accessible pathways and benches designed with inclusivity in mind

Parks, Trails & Outdoor Recreation

- Hosting volunteer events and cleanups to promote park usage
- Requests for more parks, bigger recreational areas, and pump tracks
- Interest in designated walking, biking, and hiking trails closer to town
- Call for accessible pathways and benches designed with inclusivity in mind

Public Transit

- Suggestions to improve bus routes and free transit for youth
- Concern for making town transportation more accessible and youth-friendly

Arts, Culture & Creative Spaces

- Desire for community arts spaces, maker spaces, and more arts programs
- Idea to create a public spot for music, where people can bring or borrow instruments

Youth & Community Engagement

- Calls for more social hangout spots and drop-in spaces like libraries
- Easier access to "third spaces" welcoming places outside of home or school







2.3 Group Meetings

A series of virtual and in-person discussion sessions was held in March 2025 with a range of organizations representing parks, recreation, arts, and culture in Cochrane. Participants included minor sports groups, social services, service clubs, and arts organizations, each offering unique perspectives on local facilities and services. A full list of participating organizations is provided in the Appendix.

2.3.1 Community and Recreation Meetings

The discussions covered a broad spectrum of topics, but several key themes emerged across the meetings with 32 amount parks and recreation participating organizations.



Facility Capacity and Growth Management: The Town of Cochrane faces challenges in keeping pace with rapid population growth across all recreational sectors. Organizations reported being forced to turn away participants due to insufficient facilities. Indoor facilities are particularly strained, with being limited and competitive among user groups. Organizations are forced to seek facilities outside the community and implement registration caps, particularly in younger age groups. The existing infrastructure, particularly older facilities like the arena, requires substantial upgrades to meet current demand.

Maintenance and Facility Quality: Community groups expressed frustration with inadequate maintenance of existing facilities. Outdoor facilities were frequently cited as being in poor condition, negatively impacting user experience and program quality. Some indoor facilities struggle with aging infrastructure and outdated equipment. Many groups indicated that poor maintenance creates safety concerns and affects the ability to deliver quality programming. Several organizations expressed willingness to take over maintenance responsibilities or enter into partnerships if given the opportunity to ensure facilities meet their standards.



Communication and Engagement Gaps: A consistent theme emerged regarding poor communication between the Town and user groups. Organizations reported that consultation processes either don't occur or happen too late in planning stages. There was mention that new facilities have been built without input from intended users, resulting in unusable or inappropriate infrastructure. Groups expressed feeling unheard despite providing feedback.



Multi-Use and Flexible Facilities: Community groups emphasized the need for facilities that can serve multiple sports and activities to maximize investment. There was mention of a multi-sport dome facility that could accommodate field sports to extend the playing season. Organizations highlighted the importance of designing spaces that can be adapted for different uses rather than single-purpose facilities. The concept of covered facilities that provide weather protection while remaining cost-effective was frequently mentioned.

Accessibility and Inclusion: Playground accessibility for children with disabilities was identified as needing improvement. Transportation challenges and lack of pathway connectivity affect seniors' ability to access programs and facilities. Community groups emphasized the importance of designing facilities and programs that are inclusive from the outset rather than retrofitting accessibility features.



Financial Sustainability and Affordability: Rising facility rental costs are creating barriers for many organizations, particularly smaller clubs operating on limited budgets. Groups questioned why they pay similar rates for older facilities with fewer amenities compared to newer venues. Organizations seek more predictable and affordable pricing structures, and some expressed willingness to enter into partnerships or alternative arrangements to secure better facilities.







Infrastructure Needs for Hosting: Groups identified the need for purpose-built spaces with appropriate dimensions, surfaces, and supporting infrastructure. Storage facilities for equipment were consistently mentioned as lacking. Drainage and surface quality emerged as critical factors affecting both safety and program delivery. Organizations suggested that investing in facilities capable of hosting higher-level competitions would maximize utilization, attract events to the community, and enhance Cochrane's profile while serving local needs more effectively.

Partnership and Collaboration Opportunities: Community groups expressed interest in partnerships to address facility shortages. There is potential for schools and community groups to work more closely together, though current school facilities often don't meet competitive sport requirements. Regional partnerships for specialized facilities could benefit multiple communities while sharing costs.

Volunteerism and Community Engagement: Many organizations rely heavily on volunteer support but struggle with sustainability. There is a need for better coordination and support structures to maintain continuity in community programs. Groups emphasized the importance of engaging newcomers and providing them with opportunities to connect with existing community networks. The role of community associations in advocating for neighborhood needs was highlighted as essential but challenging to maintain.

Seasonal and Weather Considerations: The short outdoor season in Alberta creates demand for facilities during limited timeframes. Weather-related cancellations significantly impact program delivery and facility utilization. Indoor alternatives are essential for year-round programming, but current indoor capacity is insufficient

2.3.2 Arts and Culture Meetings

LORD Cultural hosted a series of discussion sessions with arts and culture organizations. While some challenges overlap with those faced by recreation and sport groups in Cochrane, separate meetings and reporting help better capture the unique perspectives of this sector. Discussions focused on current opportunities and services, gaps and needs, and other organizational issues. In total, 20 groups participated.

The need to maintain, celebrate and preserve Cochrane's authentic Western heritage while welcoming new forms of cultural expression: interviews suggested that the Town's unique identity is highly valued; according to those consulted, virtually no citizen of the Town would like it to become another faceless suburban outpost. Its perceived authenticity is a major strength, and its Western identity is highly valued. Preservation is key, although it is important to note, that this does not mean the exclusion of the cultural richness and economic vitality brought to the Town by new arrivals; rather, integration is key.

One of the best ways of ensuring that Western culture and heritage continues to flourish is via arts and culture, which is to say expanding its presence from its current "location" at Western-themed events (such as the Stockmen's Foundation museum, the Lions Club Rodeo or events held at the Agricultural Society grounds) into other forms of cultural expression, such as theatre. Integration with festivals and events hosted by a variety of groups, including those offered by new arrivals (there is nothing exclusionary about traditional Western culture) would be a way to create new forms of expression. Expansion of Western culture via place-making and public art was also an idea that emerged. Cochrane's unique identity is valued by virtually all who choose to make this place home, but the community's supercharged growth threatens to disrupt that which people value: a human-sized community in an incredible natural setting with a small-town and "old West" feel. Arts and culture can help preserve that identity while providing opportunities for additional cultural input from new arrivals, thus promoting shared values and enhancing social cohesion.









Facilitating connection between cultural sector producers and experience providers is important: The cultural sector in Cochrane is rich but the various cultural groups operate in isolation from one another. Many interview participants expressed a desire for greater interconnection and communication between those involved in delivering cultural programs, events and activities, which should lead to greater collaborations and more innovative cultural products.

The sector's physical infrastructure needs are becoming acute: This point will be no surprise to many who are aware of the situation in the Town. For example, it is well known that Cochrane's Public Library is undersized for the community, both according to Provincial standards and through experience in everyday operations. Studies for a new library facility are ongoing, and this may be an opportunity to consider other cultural facility needs as part of this future capital project (a Town cultural hub) - and there are other needs across the sector.

Another area in which facilities are lacking is the performing arts. Other than large venues such as arenas, Cochrane has only one venue for performing arts: the small 205-seat theatre at the Ranche House, which is actually a lecture auditorium rather than a proper performing arts venue (which include back of house supports such as fly towers, wings, green rooms and other key elements). It is not fully accessible and is located in an out-of-the-way area of town. Virtually all participants agreed that additional, purpose-built performing arts capacity was needed, preferably downtown, which could be co-located with additional art gallery or maker-spaces that could be used for educational purposes.

The nature of these and other facilities will need to be determined according to the Town's strategic objectives, and also via future feasibility study processes with terms of reference that would include a statement on the Town's goals (which will emerge from this planning exercise).

Cochrane's status as an emerging tourist destination should be leveraged: The Province of Alberta has designated Cochrane as an emerging tourist destination. This is a major opportunity to leverage arts and culture for economic development purposes (and for local quality of life reasons as well). For example, artistic products that are uniquely "Cochrane", taking advantage of Cochrane's authentic attributes and existing strengths – in bronze sculpture, for example, or by enlivening its trail system via public art, heritage interpretation or other artistic interventions, or by providing a singular and evolving take on what it is to be town steeped in Western heritage – would set the town apart from nearby rivals such as Banff and Canmore.



Cochrane has a number of existing strengths that arts and culture can build on and enhance: The Town should "layer" future arts and cultural development on a number of existing strengths. To a great extent, this is a strategy of "making big bigger" and it can apply not only to existing cultural products and assets, but also potential new platforms for culture, which might include examples as diverse as the downtown pedestrian area to the outstanding trail system.



The importance of planning intentionally: This is the ultimate purpose of this plan: to enable the Town of Cochrane to facilitate cultural development in an intentional way to achieve a set of strategic goals. Currently, a clear focus for the Town's cultural management sector activities is lacking, and this plan seeks to fill that gap. For example, if there is to be a public art plan, then the plan must be designed to achieve a larger strategic goal(s). Likewise, if there is to be investment in a new performing arts centre or investment in other facilities, then let such investments be planned to advance an aspirational goal – which could be cultural interchange or cultivation of authentic Cochrane cultural products. This chapter outlines a set of draft goals according to which a number of objectives and actions may be developed.





Appendices

Appendix A: Community and Recreation Group Meeting Participants

1. Shooters 3 on 3 Hockey
2. Chaos Jr A Women's Hockey
3. Cochrane Minor Hockey Association
4. Cochrane Skating Club
5. Cochrane Minor Basketball
6. Tennis Club
7. Cochrane Badminton Group
8. Cochrane Triathlon Club
9. Cochrane Paddlers Committee
10. Wildrose Women's Triathlon
11. Bow Meadows Community Assoc
12. Gleneagles Community Association
13. West Valley/West Terrace Community Assoc
14. Filipino Association
15. Seniors Advisory Committee
16. Age Friendly Steering Committee
17. Grand Avenue Village
18. FCSS,Seniors Advisorty Committee
19. Inclusion Cochrane
20. Cochrane Minor Ball
21. Bow Valley Rugby Club
22. Field Hockey alberta
23. Cochrane Wolves FC
24. Cochrane Rangers Soccer
25. Mixed Slow Pitch
26. Disc Golf
27. Cochrane Endurance Project Track/XC Club
28. Kiwanis Club of Cochrane and Area
29. Cochrane Farmers Market
30. Frank Wills Community Hall
31. Cochrane Tourism
32. Cochrane & District Agricultural Society

Appendix B – Arts and Culture Group Meeting Participants

1. Cochrane Library
2. Route 22 Artist Collective Ltd
3. Cochrane Integrated Art Society
4. Cochrane Art Club
5. Foothills Art Club
6. President Stockmens / Scott Grattridge
7. Cochrane Historical and Archival Preservation Society (CHAPS)
8. Indigenous Cochrane
9. Wazin Ichinabi Ti
10. Sleeping Giants Theatre
11. Take A Bow Community Theatre
12. Ukrainian Association of Cochrane
13. Black Cochrane Community
14. Filipino Canadian Association of Cochrane Alberta
15. Cochrane Immigrant Services Committee
16. Cochrane and Area Events Society
17. Cochrane Light Up Committee
18. Cochrane Pipe Band
19. Cochrane Music Society
20. Cochrane Sings!


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